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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000720

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: FATAH LEADERS ON POSSIBILITIES OF FATAH-HAMAS  
DIALOGUE

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Thomas M. Duffy, for reasons 1.  
4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. Grassroots Fatah leader Qadura Faris said he met with senior West Bank Hamas leader (and former PA Minister) Nasser al-Din al-Sha'ar April 24 without prior coordination with Fatah officials. Faris said placing preconditions on dialogue will not bring Hamas closer to the PLO and will instead alienate those Hamas officials "who speak the voice of reason and wisdom." Faris said dialogue between Fatah and Hamas prisoners can still provide an important foundation, because if there is no Israeli-Palestinian permanent status agreement in 2008, there will be new impetus for Fatah-Hamas political dialogue. Fatah leaders say Fatah Central Committee (FCC) member Nasser Yusif planned to go to Gaza to talk with Hamas leaders, but President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) held him back. End summary.

"Fatah Should Engage with Those Hamas  
Leaders Who Speak Reason and Wisdom"

12. (C) Grassroots Fatah leader Qadura Faris told POL FSN that he met with senior Hamas leader Nasser al-Din al-Sha'ar on April 24 without prior coordination with Fatah officials. He said he understands the difference (and Fatah's red lines) between moving toward Hamas positions and pulling Hamas closer to the PLO and Fatah's platform. Faris said statements from Damascus-based Hamas leader Khalid Misha'l following his meetings with former President Carter indicate that Hamas could draw nearer to the PLO political platform and accept political realities.

13. (C) Faris said placing preconditions on dialogue will not bring Hamas closer to the PLO and will instead alienate Hamas officials "who speak the voice of reason and wisdom." He said he personally believes al-Sha'ar should be engaged and supported, noting that al-Sha'ar publicly opposed Hamas' violent takeover of Gaza. Faris said many in Fatah will not like his views on Hamas and he expects an angry response to his meeting with al-Sha'ar, but "someone must say the facts as they are."

14. (C) Fatah-Hamas agreement on a new, interim government is possible, Faris asserted, though the current government could remain in place in preparation for elections. He said this position is his own, not the official line of Fatah or of President Abbas who has firm preconditions for dialogue with Hamas. Faris said Fatah and Hamas prisoners regularly exchange views on the situation and the need for unity, but Fatah and Hamas leaders have controlled these talks and prevented the prisoners from reaching an agreement on political unity.

Prisoners Dialogue to Provide Basis  
for Future Political Dialogue  
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15. (C) The 2006 prisoners' document on national unity took the two leaderships by surprise, Faris said. However, the respective faction leaderships are rigid now in their positions, such that Faris does not expect any agreement soon. Faris said jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghuthi has conditioned his engagement with Hamas prisoners on their denunciation of the Gaza takeover. Faris said the prisoner dialogue could still provide an important foundation, because if there is no Israeli-Palestinian permanent status agreement in 2008, there will be new impetus for Fatah-Hamas political dialogue, which will necessarily draw on current prisoner talks.

Abbas Nixes Nasser Yusif Plan for  
Gaza Talks with Hamas Leaders  
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16. (C) According to Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC) member Samir Shehadah, Fatah Central Committee (FCC) member (and former Interior Minister) Nasser Yusif informed several FCC members that he intended to go to Gaza to see former Hamas PM Ismayil Haniyah and other Hamas leaders. Shehadah said Yusif's main goal was to urge Hamas leaders to accept the Egyptian-brokered ceasefire, but according to Shehadah, President Abbas rejected Yusif's idea after consulting with other FCC members (mainly Tayib Abd al-Rahim).

17. (C) Shehadah said President Abbas had entertained the idea of dispatching Yusif, who has strong security credentials, to discuss only security matters, but was

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convinced by Tayib Abd al-Rahim that Yusif's travel to Gaza would irritate too many parties ahead of Abbas' April 22-24 visit to the U.S. and President Bush's expected visit to the region in May. (Note: Other Fatah officials confirmed Yusif's plan and said it had President Abbas' reluctant approval, with Fatah leader Wahid Qaddumi saying that the idea was shot down for having bad timing possibly being misinterpreted by Hamas as a modification of Fatah's conditions for dialogue. End note).

DUFFY